



RICHARD J. CODEY
Acting Governor

New Jersey Office of the Attorney General

Division of Consumer Affairs
State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
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PETER C. HARVEY
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RECEIVED and FILED by the
NEW JERSEY STATE BOARD OF
VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINERS
on this date of: 5-28-2005

KIMBERLY S. RICKETTS
Acting Director

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May 26, 2005

By Certified and Regular Mail

Kathleen Stryeski, D.V.M.
Cream Ridge Pet Care Center and Veterinary Hospital
820 Route 537
Cream Ridge, New Jersey 08514

Re: I/M/O HELEN CAMPBELL, V.M.D.
KATHLEEN STRYESKI, D.V.M.
Complaint Number: 04-065

Letter of Admonishment In Lieu of Disciplinary Proceeding

Dear Dr. Stryeski:

This letter is to advise you that the New Jersey State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") has had an opportunity to review a complaint it received, filed by Heather Saracen, concerning the treatment which your hospital, Cream Ridge Pet Care Center and Veterinary Hospital (hereinafter "Cream Ridge") rendered to her dog, "Rocky," then a one year and five month old Boxer, on February 16 and 17, 2004.

Specifically, the information reviewed by the Board included, but is not limited to, the following documents:

1. A complaint filed, on or about July 29, 2004, by Heather Saracen, as well as any and all attachments and exhibits;
2. An undated correspondence from Helen Campbell, V.M.D., to the Board, as

well as any and all attachments and exhibits; and

3. A correspondence, dated August 18, 2004, from Kathleen Stryeski, D.V.M., to the Board, as well as any and all attachments and exhibits.

Upon review of all available information, the Board has determined that there is insufficient cause in this matter to warrant the filing of formal disciplinary charges. Notwithstanding this decision, the Board, however, asked me to convey to you its concerns with regard to this matter.

In reviewing this matter, the Board found that Rocky was presented to Cream Ridge on February 16, 2004, with complaints of lethargy, decreased appetite and vomiting for a few days prior to the office visit. Certain testing and lateral abdominal radiographs were performed. The owner also advised that Rocky occasionally ate her husband's socks. Subcutaneous fluids were administered and a follow-up appointment was scheduled for the morning of February 17, 2004.

Rocky presented in the morning still lethargic and not eating. According to Dr. Campbell's letter to the Board, radiographs taken of the dog's abdomen were suspicious so she discussed these x-rays with Dr. Stryeski. Dr. Campbell then recommended and performed exploratory surgery which was negative for a foreign body.

The Board has concluded that the veterinary medical services you provided to Rocky in this matter deviated from the acceptable standard of care in the practice of veterinary medicine in that the record presented to it fails to reveal or even suggest that you discussed alternate treatment plans or options other than surgery to the owner. Specifically, the Board's review of this matter indicates that Rocky's x-rays were suspicious and did not contain definitive evidence of a foreign body. While it is clear that you advocated surgery, there is no evidence that you considered or discussed more conservative options with Ms. Saracen. For example, an ultrasound was a reasonable diagnostic tool in this case given that Rocky's condition was not critical at that point in time. Moreover, the Board concludes that you could have initially handled Rocky's case with monitoring, since he was not deteriorating, until there was definite evidence that surgery was required.

The Board notes that your initial, and perhaps only considered and offered, treatment plan of exploratory surgery in this matter could have led to dangerous consequences had Rocky experienced complications resulting from the surgery. The Board strongly urges you to consider and discuss alternative and/or conservative treatment plans in cases and to document said discussions in your medical records in order to avoid this occurrence in the future.

As you may be aware, the Board is obligated to review every complaint received from consumers in order to assure that veterinarians licensed to practice in this State are complying with the applicable statutes, regulations and accepted standards of practice. Notwithstanding the concerns expressed in this letter, the board has determined not to initiate any formal disciplinary action against you at this time. The Board suggests that you consider the issues raised in this correspondence and comply with the directives contained herein. This matter will now be considered closed by the Board and, as such, this letter will be a matter of public record.

NEW JERSEY STATE BOARD OF
VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINERS

By: 
LESLIE G. ARONSON
Executive Director

cc: Deputy Attorney General Olga E. Bradford